

Alien: 14 Facts You Didn't Know About The Xenomorph

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In space, no one can hear you scream. Well, there was certainly a lot of screaming when this space creature first hit the screen. The Xenomorph from Ridley Scott's *Alien* series is without a doubt one of the most terrifying beasts from beyond the stars.

From its sleek, black cranium to the tip of its spear-like tail, the Xenomorph has been feasting on hapless explorers and ripping apart victims since 1979 - truly a legacy of terror. What is it about the titular alien that makes it so gruesome? We've added a few tantalizing facts about this terrifying creature that give some insight as to its design, longevity and iconic status as a pop culture monster.

Updated on October 15th, 2020 by Derek Draven: *As mentioned in our updated intro, we've added a few more entries to our list of facts about the Xenomorph species from the Alien franchise. This may shine some light into the darkness for those who dare to tread, provided their hearts can take it.*

An Acidic Idea



Conceptual artist Ron Cobb is best known for crafting some of the most mind-blowing works for major film productions, including *Star Wars*, *Conan The Barbarian*, and *Total Recall*. He also managed to deliver some good ideas outside of his realm of expertise from time to time.

The best idea he contributed to the Xenomorph's physiology was its acidic blood, which was capable of eating through multiple decks of the Nostromo before it gave out. Cobb came up with the idea to circumvent the obvious question as to why nobody bothered to shoot it with a gun and be done with it.

The Look



The original Xenomorph suit was designed to look as biomechanical as possible, yet still organic in nature. This was accomplished through the use of two rather... *interesting* products — KY Jelly and condoms.

The former was used to give the alien its slimy appearance, especially when it came to drool. The latter was used to simulate tendons that lined the alien's set of deadly inner jaws. Using either must have been a hit on set, but the end effect was exactly what Ridley Scott needed to sell the terror.

Variants



Alien fans can easily spot the difference between the original Xenomorph and the ones featured in James Cameron's smash sequel *Aliens*. The former is recognized for its sloped, smooth head, while latter is segmented with large boney plates that give it a much different and more menacing look.

Cameron updated the design for his film, but these new Xenomorph variants came to be known as Warriors — it was their duty to go on the offensive and protect the hive. The original creature came to be known as a Drone, and its tasks were much more generic in nature.

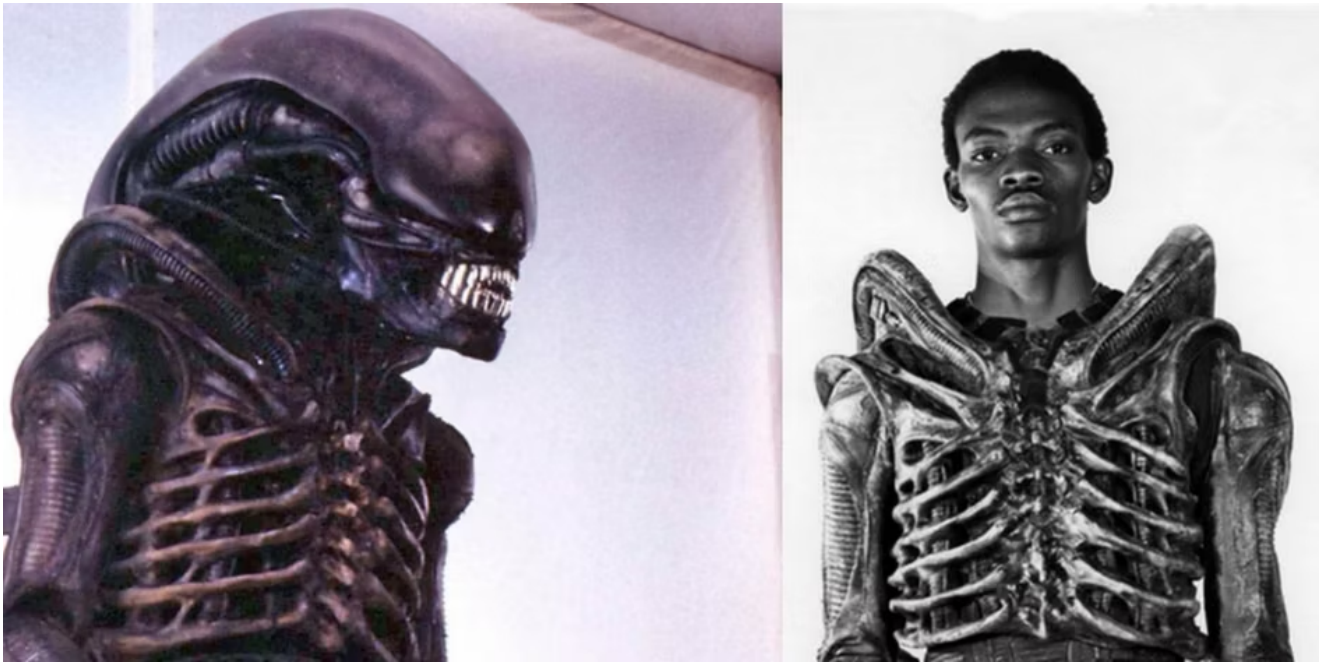
Hunter's Senses



H.R. Giger insisted that the Xenomorph lack anything resembling eyes so that it appeared much more menacing, soulless, and heartless when attacking its prey. Indeed, the lack of eyes does make the creature far more frightening as it robs the audience of an identifiable body part.

Due to lack of sight, it's been largely suggested that the Xenomorphs hunt primarily by following scent molecules such as pheromones which allow them to distinguish between prey and their own kind. Another explanation could be a sense of echolocation, but this has not been confirmed.

A First & Last Starring Role



We'll get the obvious credits out of the way by introducing the man behind the monster, Bolaji Badejo. The seven-foot-tall Nigerian artist became one of the unsung actors of Hollywood when he stepped into the black, rubbery, latex flesh of the Xenomorph in the original *Alien*. Talk about a great first role.

Despite the success of the film, it would be the only time Badejo was featured as the Xenomorph, though the artist would always remain proud of his role. Badejo later returned to Nigeria in 1983 to further his art career before tragically passing in 1992 of sickle-cell anemia.

The Man Who Made The Monster



One of the most prolific avant-garde artists of the '70s was German designer, H.R. Giger. His nightmarish and bio-industrial-inspired designs powered Ridley Scott's decision to have him create the world of *Alien*. A trip through his gallery is enough to give Lovecraft the shivers.

Giger designed, sculpted, and created the Xenomorph, winning him an Oscar for design in 1979. His work would later be featured in all the *Alien* sequels, as well as the *AVP* spinoffs. We highly recommend checking out some of his artwork, but it's not for squeamish eyes or faint hearts.

Alien Versus...



The crew of the *Nostromo* isn't the only group of unfortunate souls to take on the Xenomorph. The carnivorous space-creep has locked horns with the likes of the Predator, Terminator, Darth Vader, Green Lantern, and even the Dark Knight himself, Batman. That's quite a list of opponents to have on one's resume.

Obviously, these encounters all happened in comic form, except for a *Predator* crossover film or video game title, and aren't considered canon. Still, it is fun to imagine what might happen if our favorite Superheroes or action stars came in contact with one of these bad-boys.

An Adaptable Alien



One thing fans of the Xenomorph might have noticed is the many forms the species can take. From the Facehugger to bi-pedal humanoid model, there's an alien for all occasions. But what separates the bipedal original from the canine-like version in *Alien 3*? Simple, the species of the host.

Think about it - the reason we get the two-legged terror in the first film is that it bursts out of a human host. Likewise, the quadruped version spawns out of a dog, giving it the haunches and longer tail. This definitely opens the imagination to Xenomorph crossbreeds. The possibilities could be delightfully gruesome.

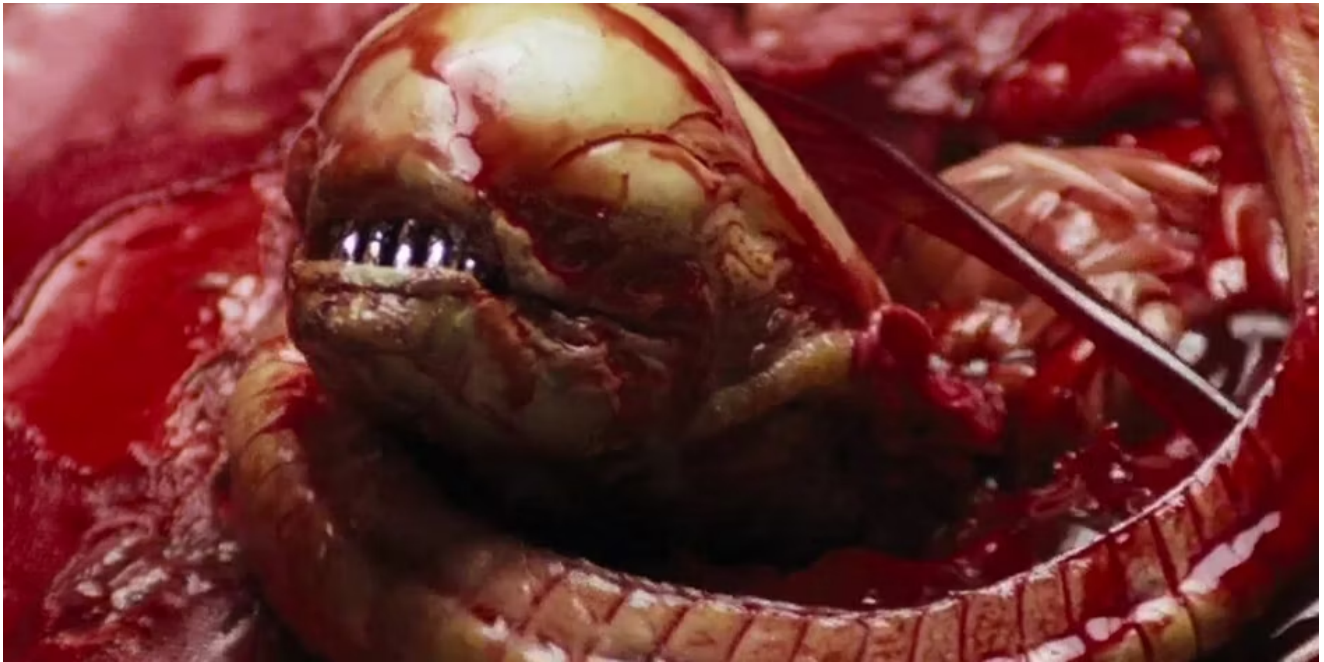
Extermination



Thanks to a mishmash of lore in the prequels, there are loads of theories to the reason for the Xenomorphs existence. But we think this one is probably the most fearsome. In the prequel film *Prometheus*, it's revealed that the Xenomorphs are essentially the ultimate form of biological warfare.

They are essentially the perfect killing machine. As Ash describes in the first film, they are unhindered by conscience or morality, making them ideal for carnage. The problem is keeping the monsters contained. Then it's time to call in the Predators to clean up the mess.

Unscripted Scare



One of the most iconic moments in sci-fi movie history is the appearance of the Chestburster towards the end of *Alien*'s first act. When the larva-like creature bursts out of Kane's chest, it not only disgusted and frightened countless audience members, but the cast as well.

In a jumpscare completely unknown to the rest of the crew outside of John Hurt, the Chestburster effect garnered real reactions from the grossed-out crew. Ron Shusett, producer and screenwriter, said Ridley didn't tell the cast, "They're just going to see it." And in an instant, *Alien* became iconic.

Feeling The Burn



Riddle us this, how do you kill the most blood-thirsty creature in the galaxy? The answer, cook 'em! The Xenomorphs are extremely sensitive to heat, making flamethrowers the weapon of choice against these cosmic critters. Not only does it make for an effective weapon, but the use of fire also makes for some pretty stellar-looking scenes as well.

Whether it's Ripley wandering the shadowy halls of a spaceship with a flickering flame or a monster mashing it in *Alien: Isolation*, you can't deny how awesome it is to watch these things get toasted. Or you could just launch them out the airlock, to each their own.

Something Familiar



A group of travelers on a spaceship with a rabid alien on their backs: What an awesome idea for a video game! The Xenomorph would definitely be more dangerous than your typical space invader, but Nintendo had the perfect solution. Instead of a licensed *Alien* title, the film inspired one of the company's biggest titles, *Metroid*.

Think about it, *Metroid* is a game with a strong female protagonist, a planet full of head-sucking aliens, and a spooky, isolated atmosphere. Sounding like something you've seen before? Without Ripley, the Xenomorph, or the Nostromo, there would be no Samus, *Metroid*, or Mother Brain.

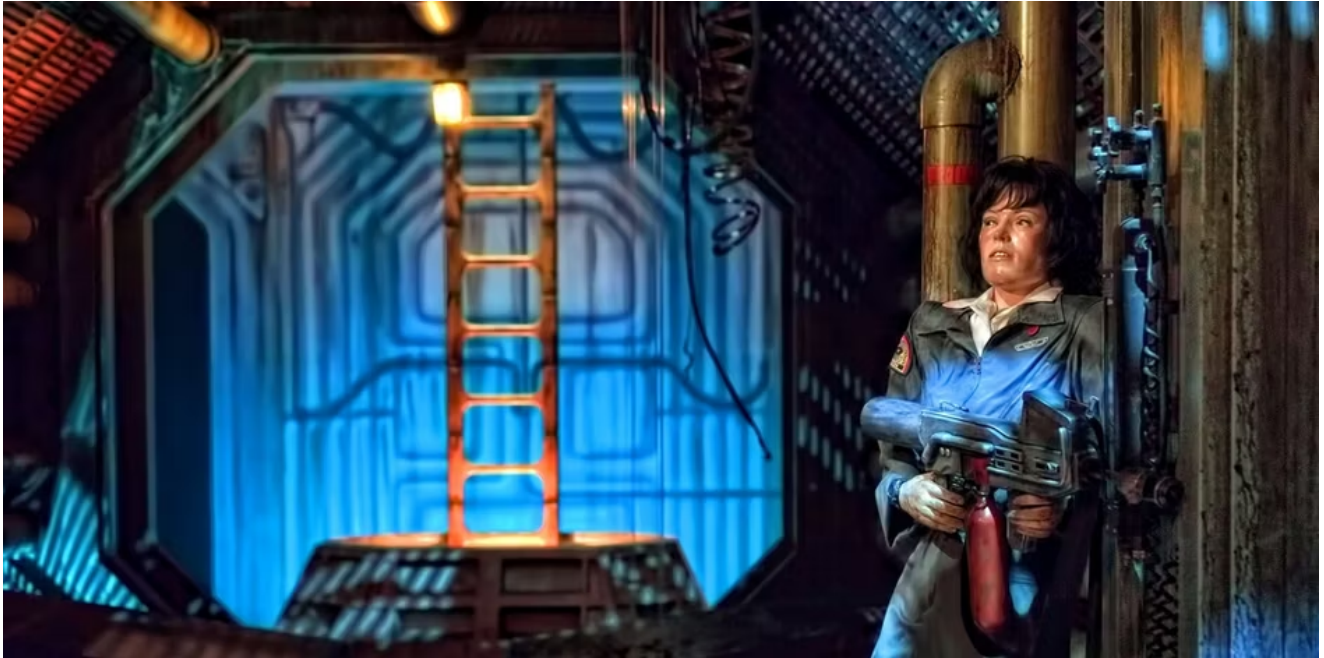
Stalking Hollywood Studios



The Xenomorph and Mickey Mouse don't seem like they'd be the best of buddies, do they? From 1989 to 2017, Disney's Great Movie Ride was host to a cast of familiar movie characters and one scary space creature. Complete with its own Disney animatronic, the Xenomorph was easily one of the more memorable, and certainly the scariest, moment from the attraction.

The ride car pulls guests into the climactic escape from the Nostromo. Alarms ring and fog gushes from the pipes of the ship, along with an "acid" spitting Xenomorph from the walls and ceiling! Unfortunately, the ride closed in 2017, but this wasn't the alien's first dance with Disney.

The Xenomorph Takes Tomorrowland



Believe it or not, the House of Mouse once considered making an *Alien*-themed attraction for Tomorrowland. Known as ExtraTERRORestrial Alien Encounter, the attraction was based on the Nostromo and was intended to be a pure-horror experience.

The original title was "Nostromo" and the attraction took place aboard the ship with the Xenomorph as the star attraction. Similar to the movies, the creature would menace the audience, spit, growl, and be altogether terrifying. Unfortunately, as the movie garnered an R rating, Disney deemed it too frightening and stuck the Alien with an appearance in The Great Movie Ride.